

Times Your Community

Partners in public safety

By Councilmember Rose Herrera

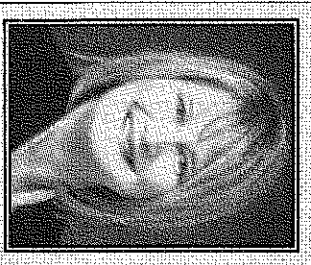
Special to the Times

District 8 citizens have spoken: Protecting public safety is one of the highest priorities for our district. As your councilmember, I am determined to find new and creative ways to maintain our city's status as one of the safest in the country, and my goal is to ensure the highest levels of public safety funding despite the unprecedented budget shortfall.

In addition to the San Jose Police and Fire Departments, new partners for public safety are emerging. Employees are hard at work in our community centers, libraries, anti-graffiti, and litter abatement programs, doing their part to keep San Jose's quality of life high and the crime rate low.

For example, unsightly graffiti depresses property values and jeopardizes public safety. We are fortunate to have an effective and responsive anti-graffiti team in our district. But under the current budget scenario, response times for graffiti removal will increase. In order to ensure the city can continue to fight graffiti and maintain funding for this valuable program, something needs to change. It cannot be on the chopping block every year.

To ensure the anti-graffiti program can be preserved and strengthened, I am championing a proposal for a dedicated revenue stream to ensure that the city will always have the resources it needs to fight graffiti. I am proposing the city explore an annual fee paid by the stores that sell spray paint and other graffiti tools. I strongly believe we must be one step ahead of those that commit this crime and be proactive in shoring up our resources to keep our city graffiti-free. If you are interested in joining the Anti-Graffiti Program as a citizen volunteer, please call (408) 277-3208 or e-mail anti-graffiti@sanjoseca.gov to get the information you need to start fighting graffiti today. You can also upload photos of graffiti using the Police Department's Web site at www.sjpd.org. There is also a new anti-graffiti endeavor under-



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way in two other council districts that is about to come to District 8. Albert Balago, PRNS Director and Overfelt High School alumnus, is optimistic about its effectiveness. I will share with you more details as it rolls out here in our community.

Like our Anti-Graffiti program, our Anti-Litter Campaign has done a great job of locating "hot spots" in our district. Areas such as Silver Creek High School, King Road, Thompson Creek, Brigadoon Park, and Welch Park, among others will receive special attention as we focus our attention and resources to keeping litter and illegal dumping in our district to a minimum. A full list of hotspots is available on the Anti-Litter site on www.sanjoseca.gov. One of the most effective tools to prevent this growing problem is an active volunteer corps of residents within our district. I encourage you to help keep our district clean by volunteering with The Anti-Litter Campaign. Please call (408) 277-3208 for more information.

During these difficult times, we are fortunate to have so many dedicated public servants in the City of San Jose. For example, Angela McCarren at our library, Aurelia Bailey at our community center, and Andre Morro with the Parks Department work tirelessly to share their talents with District 8 and make San Jose a better place to live. We benefit from their expertise and commitment to public service. Let's congratulate employees who set a fine example.

We must remember that crimes will continue to occur regardless of staffing and funding levels. Effective public safety requires the vigilance of all stakeholders in our community, including public servants, elected officials and residents. While I am confident in the San Jose Police Department, we must all work together and raise awareness in our community. As we progress through these difficult economic times, I am continually refreshed and encouraged by all the community members that have partnered to make San Jose a wonderful place to live and work.

Save the date: National Night Out on Tuesday, Aug. 3.

Get connected: Sign up for the District 8 newsletter: www.sanjoseca.gov/district8. Nominate a D8 Grad at www.sanjoseca.gov/district8.

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